

Appl. No: 09/779,147
Amdt. Dated July 13, 2004
Reply to Office action of April 21, 2004

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Prior to this Amendment, claims 1-27 were pending for consideration in this application. Claim 26 is amended to correct a typographical error. No new matter is added by the amendment

Claims 1-27 remain in the application for consideration by the Examiner

Claim Objections

Claim 26 was objected to because of a typographical error. Claim 26 is amended to delete the words "prior to" as suggested by the Examiner.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102

In the Office Action dated April 21, 2004, claims 10-12, 15-18, 20, and 24-27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Pat. No. 6,591,296 ("Ghanime"). This rejection is respectfully traversed based on the following remarks.

Claim 10 is directed to a method for automatically responding to error alerts created by network devices. The method includes providing a network device file comprising identification information for each device in the network, receiving an error alert comprising failure information, and "validating the received error alert as being transmitted by one of the network devices by comparing the failure information" in the alert with the identification information in the network device file. The method continues with "if the received error alert is validated" creating a job ticket. Ghanime fails to teach validating received error alerts by comparing information in received alerts with identification information and further fails to only create a job ticket "if the received error alert is validated." Because each and every element is not shown in Ghanime, claim 10 is not anticipated, and the rejection is improper and should be withdrawn.

More particularly, the Office Action cites Ghanime at col. 4, lines 14-16 for teaching the validation of received error alerts. However, at this citation, Ghanime teaches that upon detection of a fault a sensor on a machine

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generates the fault and an "OSM generates an email message listing the email account for the sensor." The OSM is not taught as "validating" the sensor prior to generating the email and Ghanime never suggests that the recipient validates the OSM-generated email by comparing information in the email with a listing of sensors. Instead, Ghanime simply teaches the use of sensor identifiers for allowing a reader of the email to determine which sensor issued identified the fault. Further, claim 10 also requires that a job ticket is only generated if the error alert is validated. Ghanime is cited in the Office Action at col. 2, lines 52-61 for providing this teaching. At this citation, Ghanime is teaching that an email is generated every time a fault is detected and that the sensor is identified in the "addressor line of the email message." There is no checking to determine if the email has been validated prior to generating the email message but instead every fault results in an email which must be processed by recipients or addressees. For these reasons, the method of claim 10 is not shown or even suggested by Ghanime, and claim 10 is in condition for allowance.

Claims 11, 12, 15-18, and 20 depend from claim 10 and are believed allowable as depending from an allowable base claim. Additionally, claim 11 calls for the validating to include comparing a network domain in the identification information with a domain in the failure information of the error alert. Ghanime fails to teach comparing information to validate the message. At the Office Action citations of col. 4, lines 14-16 and col. 5, lines 11-20 is merely discussing that each sensor has an email account with a website domain name but no teaching of comparing this domain name to a list for validation is provided in Ghanime.

Claim 16 calls for the failure information to include geographic information for the one network device and the method to include "identifying a maintenance center associated with the one network device based on the geographic location information." The Office Action cited Ghanime at col. 5, lines 62-64 for providing this teaching, but Ghanime teaches sending a message to a maintenance group that is linked to the sensor. In other words, a geographical location is not

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determined nor used to determine the correct maintenance center but instead, the maintenance center is preassigned and simply retrieved in a look up step.

Claim 18 calls for determining a member within a service group to receive the error alert and electronically notifying that member. The Office Action cites Ghanime at col. 4, lines 35-50, which only teaches that a human operator receives an email at the "MDC 116" and views the email. Hence, Ghanime teaches that all emails are sent to an "MDC 116" and there is no selective notification as called for in claim 18.

Claim 20 calls for the method to include "prior to the job ticket creating, performing diagnostics" on the network device and verifying location information and then, including this information in the job ticket. Ghanime fails to teach these additional limitations. The Office Action points to Ghanime at col. 2, lines 52-61 for teaching the additional elements presented in claim 20. However, Ghanime at this citation provides absolutely no teaching of performing diagnostics on a machine associated with the sensor that detected a condition on a machine or of verifying location information for the machine. Instead, Ghanime is simply discussing automatically generating an email in response to a sensor detecting a fault and including an identifier of the sensor in the addressor line. The addressor line includes the plant location of the machine but this location is not verified in Ghanime. For these additional reasons, claims 16, 18, and 20 are believed allowable over Ghanime.

Independent claim 24 is directed to a service support system that includes a memory device including files for storing identification data for network devices, for storing threshold limits for previously identified network failure types, and for storing tracking information for these failure types indicating a number of the error alerts received relating to each failure type. An auto ticket tool receives error alerts and processes the error alerts to identify the failure type, to determine "if the threshold limit for the failure type is exceeded based on the updated tracking information," and if the threshold is exceeded, creates a job ticket. Ghanime fails to teach the use of threshold values for failure types to

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determine when to issue job tickets. For at least this reason, claim 24 is allowable in light of the teaching of Ghanime.

The Office Action cites Ghanime at col. 3, lines 52-58 for teaching storing threshold limits of previously identified network failure types and their tracking information. At this citation, Ghanime provides a very different teaching. Ghanime teaches databases 110 that store information regarding acceptable operating limits for the power generation equipment being monitored by the sensors 106 and information for determining operating problems with the sensors. There is no teaching of storing thresholds for various problems or tracking of such problems. For example, Ghanime does not teach storing for a turbine the threshold of "3" for "vibration outside of acceptable limits" or "pressure outside limits." Instead, Ghanime teaches sending an email message for fault detected by a sensor – which may result in the difficulty of numerous fault email messages that are repetitive (e.g., an email message will be generated every time a sensor detects operation of a machine outside of a preset range) or even false as discussed in Applicant's Background. Hence, for at least this reason, Ghanime does not show the system of claim 24.

Further, the Office Action cites Ghanime at col. 5, lines 51-60 for receiving an error alert and comparing updated tracking information to a threshold value to determine if a job ticket should be created for a particular network device. Ghanime teaches that the OSM 102 in step 212 monitors the sensors 106 and when they generate a failure or other anomaly signal the OSM 102 "determines whether an email message should be issued" and if determined appropriate, the email message is sent. There is no teaching that the OSM 102 updates tracking information for the machine associated with the sensor and compares this updated tracking information with a threshold for a particular, previously identified problem. Instead, it is likely that the OSM 102 determines if the sensor has detected operation outside of an acceptable operating range, and if so, an email message is generated. There is no apparent tracking of ongoing operations prior to generating such an email. For this additional reason,

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Ghanime does not anticipate claim 24, and Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection based on Ghanime be withdrawn.

Claims 25-27 depend from claim 24 and are believed allowable as depending from an allowable base claim. Additionally, claim 26 calls for determining whether the network device is on an outage list prior to generating the job ticket. Ghanime is cited at col. 5, lines 53-60 for teaching this limitation. As discussed with reference to claim 24, Ghanime indicates that its OSM 102 determines whether an email message should be sent when a sensor generates a failure signal but provides no teaching or even a suggestion that such determining includes accessing an outage list with the identification of the machine being monitored by the sensor to determine whether or not to send the email message. Claim 27 includes limitations similar to claim 16, and the reasons for allowing claim 16 are equally applicable to claim 27. For these additional reasons claims 26 and 27 are believed allowable over Ghanime.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103

Additionally, in the Office Action, claims 1-9 and 21-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Pat. No. 6,704,782 ("Achtermann") in view of Ghanime. This rejection is respectfully traversed based on the following remarks.

The method of claim 1 calls for "processing an error alert to identify a failure type from the failure information" in the error alert. Achtermann fails to teach such processing. The Office Action cites Achtermann at col. 6, lines 24-38 but at this citation, Achtermann is teaching target processors sending state messages (which "may be disabled by the system administrator") and is not teaching error alerts that need to be processed to determine a failure type from included failure information.

Further, claim 1 calls for comparing an updated tracking value for an identified failure type to a threshold limit and if the threshold is exceeded, creating a job ticket for the particular device. The Office Action states that

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Achtermann fails to show creating a job ticket when a threshold limit is exceeded, and as a result, cites Ghanime in an attempt to overcome this deficiency in Achtermann. However, as discussed with reference to claim 24, Ghanime provides no teaching of tracking of the number of times a fault is identified by a sensor and comparing this tracked number with a threshold. Instead, Ghanime teaches sensors that monitor machines and a monitor that issues emails when the sensor detects operation outside a predetermined operating range (not when the machine operates outside the range a number of times that exceeds a threshold). Further, claim 1 requires that the threshold limit be specific to the identified failure type and Achtermann and Ghanime fail to teach setting thresholds differently for differing types of problems. Hence, the rejection of claim 1 based on Achtermann and Ghanime is not proper and should be withdrawn.

Claims 2-9 depend from claim 1 and are believed allowable at least for the reasons for allowing claim 1. Further, claim 2 calls for differing threshold limits and Ghanime fails to teach the use of any threshold limits for failure types but instead only teaches operating ranges for machines, e.g., a sensor may identify a failure or fault based on these operating ranges but no monitor determines if this has been detected a predefined number of times. Claim 3 calls for the thresholds to be modified and this is not shown at col. 3, lines 47-51 of Ghanime, which merely mentions that databases are used to store acceptable ranges of operation for machines. No discussion is provided of altering these operating ranges, and in any event, these ranges are not threshold limits quantifying the number of times a failure can occur before a job ticket is generated. For these additional reasons, the rejection of claims 2 and 3 in light of the combined teaching of Achtermann and Ghanime is not proper and should be withdrawn.

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Independent claim 21 is directed to a computer program product for processing error alerts. The reasons for allowing claim 1 are believed equally applicable to claim 21. Claims 22-23 depend from claim 21 and are believed allowable as depending from an allowable base claim. Further, claim 22 includes limitations similar to claim 26 and the deficiencies of Ghanime pointed out with reference to claim 26 are applicable to claim 22. Further, claim 23 calls for correcting a portion of the failure information in the job ticket. Ghanime is cited at col. 4, lines 6-26 for teaching this limitation, but at this citation, there is no teaching or suggestion that any information from the sensor may be incorrect or that it can or should be corrected. For these additional reasons, claims 22 and 23 are allowable over the combined teachings of these references.

Further, in the Office Action, claims 13 and 14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ghanime in view of U.S. Pat. No. 6,581,092 ("Motoyama"). This rejection is rejected based on the following remarks.

Claims 13 and 14 depend from claim 10 and are believed allowable as depending from an allowable base claim. Further, Motoyama fails to overcome the deficiencies in Ghanime discussed above with reference to claim 10. Particularly, Motoyama provides no teaching of "validating" an error alert by comparing failure information in the alert with identification information and then, only if the error alert is thus validated creating a job ticket. Further, Motoyama fails to teach that such validating may include inspecting the subject line of an alert for non-valid subject items (claim 13) such as "forward and reply" (claim 14). Instead, Motoyama merely looks to see if an email can be received based on whether the email "is for the attached device" by parsing the message for a code. Claims 13 and 14 do not determine if the email is for the user or attached device but instead determines if an error alert is valid for use in creating a job ticket by inspecting the subject line. For these additional reasons, the rejection of claims 13 and 14 is improper based on the combination of Ghanime and Motoyama, and it is requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

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Conclusions

In view of all of the above, the claims are now believed to be allowable and the case in condition for allowance. Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

No fee is believed due with this Amendment, but any fee deficiency associated with this submittal may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-1123.

Respectfully submitted,

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